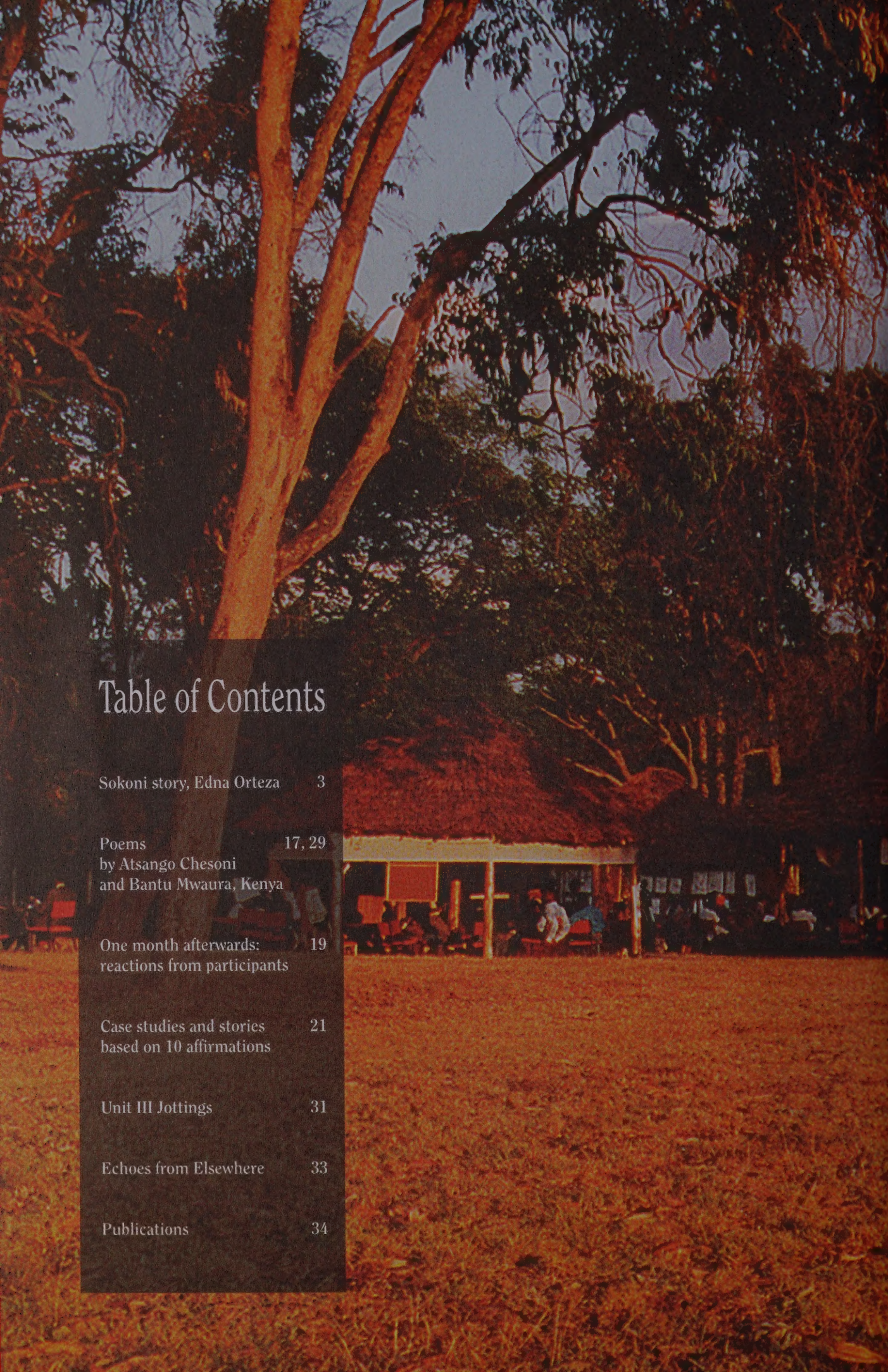
11/1997

ECHOES

justice, peace and creation news

FEATURING

Sokoní



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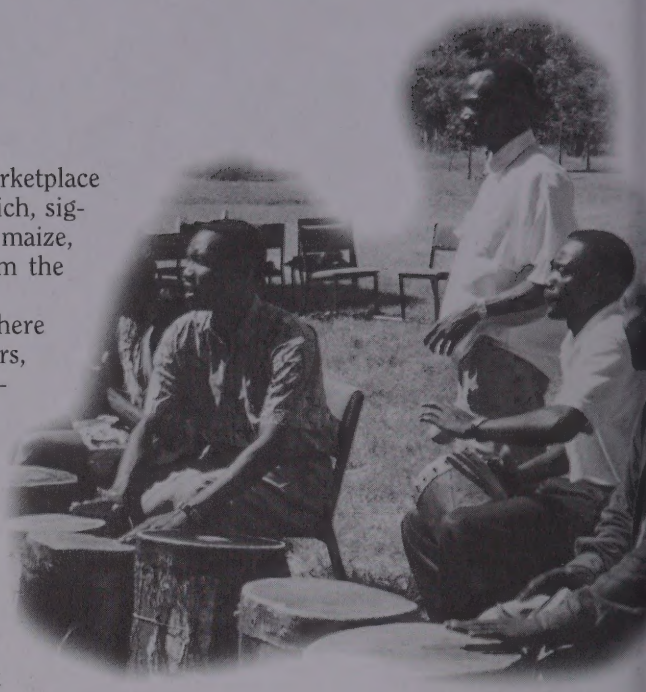
THE SOKONI, A STORY

by Edna Orteza

Long after the last bonfire where Kenyan traditional storyteller Bantu Mwaura had told one of his engaging tales, the spirit of the sokoni remained in the hearts of those who participated in this unprecedented event in the life and work of the World Council of Churches. The beating of the drums, the singing and dancing, the children's poetry, the youth's creative passion, the women's dramatic presentation of their agonies, aspirations and dreams - these, along with symbols, various art forms, traditional costumes, colors and sounds have created enduring images for the people who came.



Sokoni is a Swahili word for "marketplace". A marketplace where sellers and buyers come to trade goods which, significantly in many cases, are products of the land maize, bananas, mangoes, vegetables, root crops; or from the backyard, such as poultry and other livestock.

But, more than a marketplace, the ***sokoni*** is where people come to meet other people: trading partners, friends, neighbors, even the village idiot and, perhaps, an itinerant preacher or a campaigning politician. It is said that a ***sokoni*** is not authentic without the presence of a boisterous drunkard, a mad man or a comic hero. It is around these personalities that traders set up their wares and begin their lively banter. Here, people come as they are, melting into the ***sokoni*** atmosphere.

A ***sokoni*** is, essentially, a place for encounter and exchange, not only of goods, but of ideas and information. It is where people get news about other people as well as about past and forthcoming events. In times of social upheaval or political turmoil, such as in the Mau Mau period, this open space often served as a nerve center for covert sharing of information.

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WHY THE SOKONI?

In 1995, the Unit III Commission made a decision to hold its 1997 meeting in the context of a ***sokoni***. A rather courageous attempt as it was their last Commission meeting before the WCC General Assembly. Significant decisions had to be made. Aside from receiving reports on the programmes and the Theology of Life case studies, the agenda of the Commission meeting itself included the development of two important documents: the legacy paper (of Unit III achievements since the Canberra assembly), and the Commission's response to the draft *Common Understanding and Vision* document.

The concept of the ***sokoni*** reflects the values and principles underlying the Theology of Life programme. And, indeed, the ***sokoni*** experience had provided a glimpse of how it is possible for communities to develop a culture of life and solidarity.

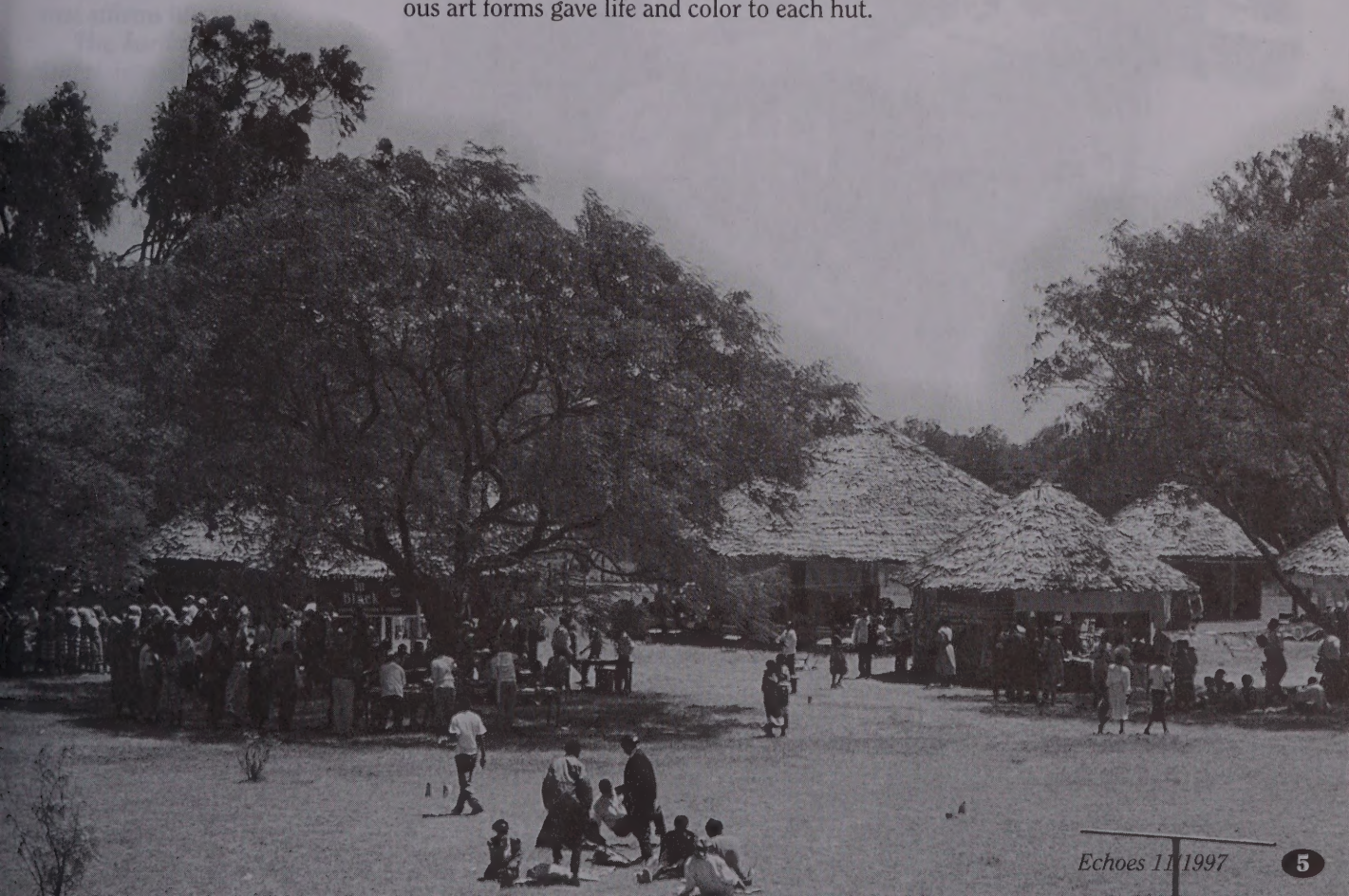
WHO CAME?

A broad spectrum of people came to the *sokoni* Commission members, staff, case study coordinators, observers, guests, local groups of women, children, youth, church leaders, government officials, choirs, project coordinators, development workers . . . Drummers, singers, dancers, poets, artists, drama groups, story tellers, known actors and actresses . . . Farmers, workers, traders, refugees, widows, orphans . . . Turkana, Maasai, Mbeere, Kikuyu . . . In all, there were about 300-400 people each day, with 700 during the *karibuni* of the first day's welcome.

WHERE?

The *sokoni* took place in the sprawling training complex of the Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) in Karen, near Nairobi, a few kilometers from the National Park, one of the many wildlife and animal parks for which Kenya is famous. The Kenyan hosts built seven huts, whose design and structure were said to be a reflection of the African cosmology, around a large central hut. The idea was to allow freedom of movement so that activities could flow easily into any of the huts. At a distance, a tent was put up for video presentations.

The 22 case studies, based on the Affirmations from the Seoul JPIC World Convocation, were clustered into six themes: power, creation, peace, justice, youth and women. Each theme was assigned a hut. Banners, woven cloth, quilts, patchwork, posters, books, photographs, brochures, buttons, cards, crafts, symbols and various art forms gave life and color to each hut.



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In the spirit of the *sokoni*, Kenyans also set themselves up in the huts to trade wares: woven baskets, wooden statues and masks, beaded bracelets and anklets, woolen sweaters, batik shirts and dress materials, batik paintings depicting African life, soapstone sculptures . . . These wares were handcrafted by local artisans, some of them supported by agencies and groups, like ECLOF and SWAN (Sudanese Women's Association in Nairobi).

The setting provided a great sense of freedom. Participants moved from hut to hut according to their interests, talking, telling stories, buying and haggling, doing patchwork, listening, getting a tan. . . Nonie Wales had set up a continuous quilting activity for those who visited the women's hut. Roger Williamson, who was convenor of the Listeners' Group which reported each evening, created his own space for eavesdropping. He set up a Rise and Shine chair for shoe-shining. All he asked in payment was that his clients should talk with him. He was busy all week, shining shoes for a story. A session with Philip Potter, as well as with many Kenyans, got the attention of photographers.

The weather was fine: the days were sunny and warm and the evenings were cool. Each day began with the beating of the drums, sometimes accompanied by the contrasting music from a flute, and ended with a *lala salama* (Swahili, meaning "good night"), around a bonfire where the listeners and participants shared experiences, insights and reflections. Then people danced or listened to Bantu's stories. The sound of drums echoed far into the night.

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THE KARIBUNI

Karibuni is the Swahili word for "welcome". And, indeed, there was a long welcome with traditional songs and dances. Paramount Chief Jonathan Ole Loopisia offered traditional Maasai prayers by way of welcoming visitors to Kenya. These were responded to by Te Rua Winiata from Aotearoa-New Zealand. Rev. John Gatu (PCEA) and Bishop Joseph Wasonga (NCCK) welcomed those who had gathered as a world community in the *sokoni*. Konrad Raiser and Sam Kobia spoke about the *sokoni* as an alternative to the logic of existing economic and financial systems as well as the importance of people's participation in the promotion of a theology that affirms life.

The *karibuni* continued into the night with a sumptuous feast.

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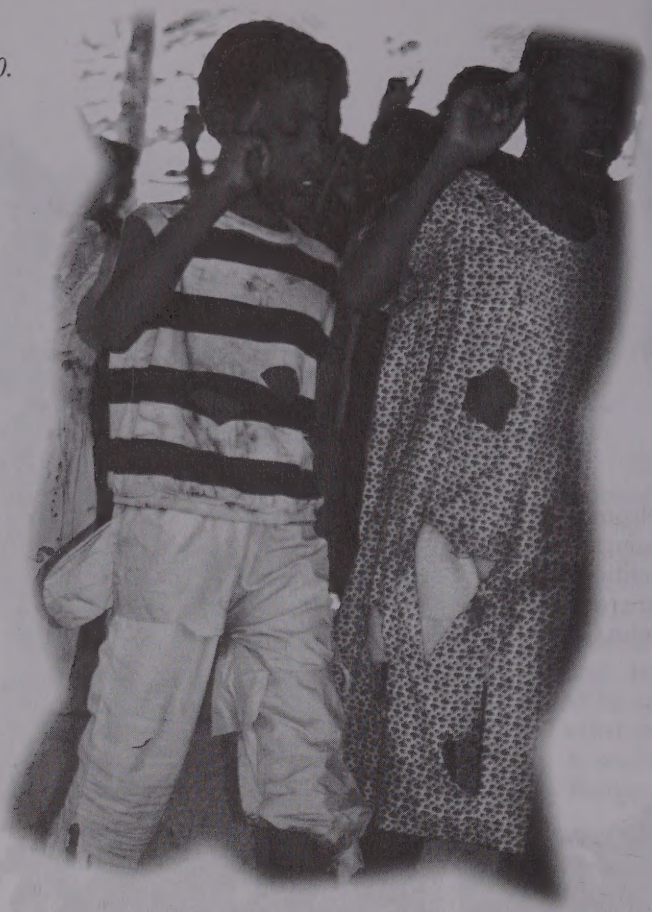

WORSHIP

Worship was organized by a local team led by Dr. Peter Bisem and Ven. Sam Mawiyoo. The *karibuni* itself was part of the opening worship.

Different groups of people from all over Kenya, some of them from as far as Mombasa, came each day. Integration began during worship. Church leaders extended greetings; local choirs sang choruses; on two mornings Kenyan pastors gave homilies on texts from the Book of Revelations. Women and children relived their own life stories with much longing and pain. The Sudanese women acted out Rachel weeping over her children with tears of agony and anger. Street children, most of them orphans and refugees, dramatized their plight, recited sad poems and then sang praises, their small voices piercing through the hearts of participants, bringing tears to many.

As a whole, the worship services provided a glimpse of the varying manifestations of faith in the socio-historical and political context of Africa. The dynamics of gospel and culture was most manifest in the beating of the drums and in the blending of traditional and contemporary music.

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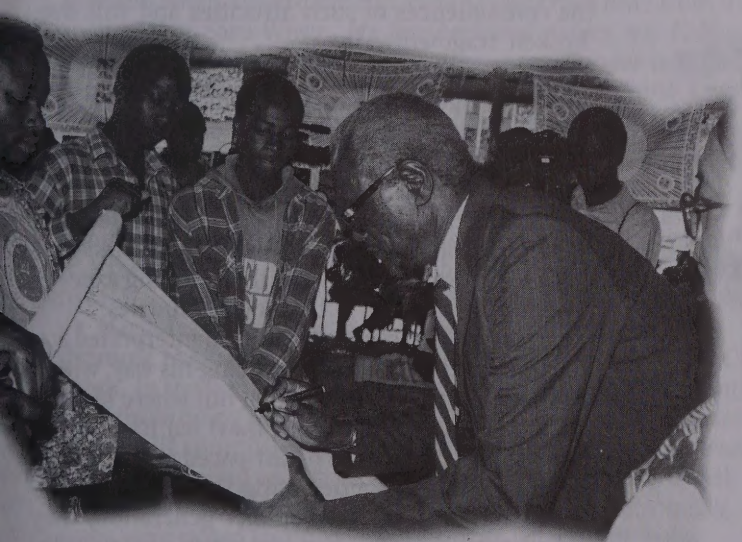
CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS

The case study coordinators met two days before the *sokoni* to work on their presentations with a team of animators. They split to work the six broad themes. How to present experiences of two years was no mean task. Given the variety of contexts, issues, approaches and methodologies, it was difficult even to begin telling one's story. In the end, the coordinators agreed to highlight only the significant and common elements in the case studies.

The presentations began with a focus on Africa a celebration of the people's long years of struggle against colonization. Stories of life and death, of continuing struggles, of failures and successes, of weaknesses and challenges ... were shared by past and present generations of political leaders and activists.



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The sharing on the continuing struggle for a culture of life and solidarity included a moment of remembering youth, women and men who have committed their lives to the vision of justice, peace and integrity of creation - martyrs, living and dead. They, too, were part of the *sokoni*. A scroll was carried in a procession from hut to hut where stories of martyrs in different countries were told. The scroll remained a prominent feature during the *sokoni*. Participants every now and then added names to the list.

Case studies were presented each day. Some told stories; others did analysis. There were stories, poetry, drama, role plays, panel presentations, singing, dancing ...

- Agnes Abuom (Kenya), Fulata Moyo (Malawi), Thoko Mpumlwana and Russell Botman (South Africa) role-played the dynamics of power and powerlessness in many countries in Africa, and posed challenges to the churches. They highlighted the role of women in bringing about much needed change.

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• Synnove Brevik (Norway), Stan McKay (Canada), Alofa Nuusila (Western Samoa), Rodney Peterson (USA), Eugenio Poma (Bolivia), Tara Tautari and Te Rua Winiata (Aotearoa-New Zealand) shared stories of creation as told by their ancestors and as lived in their own communities. The session affirmed the spirituality inherent in many Indigenous communities which is expressed in their harmonious relationship with nature and the rest of creation.

•In the manner of radio interviews with Kenyan animateur Njeri, Aldo Etchegoyen from Argentina and Peeter Kaldur of Estonia spoke about peace in the context of widespread violation of human rights in their countries during dictatorial regimes. Many people continue to suffer the consequences of such atrocities and still live broken, fragmented lives.

• Poverty, migration, racism, casteism and human rights abuses were among the issues raised during the presentation of the case studies on justice. In a conversation animated by Maggie Hamilton, Manchala Deenabandhu (India), Prince Devanandan (Sri Lanka), Heinz Juergen-Joppien (Germany) and Miklos Menessy (Romania) shared their varying experiences of injustice in their own countries.

• Simeon Joseph (Dominica) interpreted a song from the Caribbean, dancing his way, with the beat of reggae, into the big hut where he and Nemuel Fajutagana (Philippines) led the participants through an hour of fast-paced music, movements and words. Depicting the fervor, dignity and dynamism of the younger generation, they had combined creative and artistic forms with analysis and attracted the participation of quite a number of people. While most of the sessions took place in the big hut, they succeeded in drawing the participants into their hut to a reading of the youth's own affirmation of life.

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• Telling a story, Nonie Wales (Australia) spoke bravely about some of the difficulties women in Australia face with the predominant image of God as father, and on the discrimination women suffer in many male-centred churches. She called for the creation of alternative images of God which are inclusive of life-affirming feminine qualities. Davina Moscoso (Brazil) continued to share about similar problems in Brazil and the initiatives of women in helping recreate, in the consciousness of many people, an inclusive image of God.

PROGRAMME REPORTS

The sharing on priority programmes of Unit III formed part of the *sokoni*. These were also presented in creative ways.

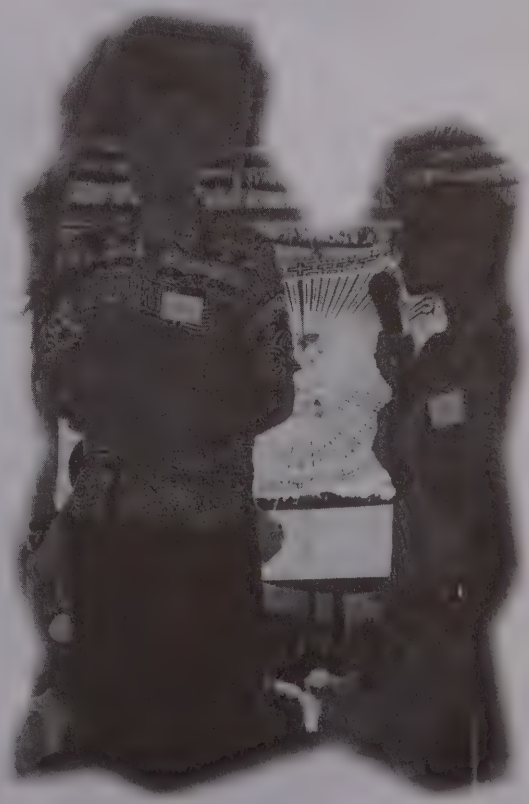
• The big hut was transformed into a trial court when Unit III staff member Deborah Robinson, Karimi Kinoti (Kenya) and Paul Onsongo (Kenya) presented the Ogoni report. It was a moving moment when, toward the end, Philip Potter read lines from the writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa: *My brothers and sisters, my beloved children, dance, dance, dance . . . Dance your anger and your joys, dance the military guns to silence, dance their dumb laws to the dump. Dance oppression and injustice to death . . . Dance my people; for we have seen tomorrow and there is an Ogoni star in the sky.*

• On the subject of impunity, Aldo Etchegoyen shared about efforts done in Argentina. Russell Botman talked of initiatives undertaken by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

• Margot Kaessmann and Janice Love reported on the Programme to Overcome Violence (POV) and the Peace to the City campaign. In the same panel was Hikias Asseffa (Ethiopia), presently based in Nairobi doing work on peace and conflict resolution in Africa.

• Unit III commissioner Yvonne Delk began the presentation n racism with a moving recollection of the events and the spirit with ich the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) came into being. cific issues were raised through readings from each of the huts.

• The presentation on the Decade of Churches in Solidarity Women flowed naturally into the morning activities which began worship and the case study reports from Australia and Brazil. Thoko umlwana (moderator of the Mandated Working Group on Women), a symbolic gesture, handed over the Decade Report to Konrad Raiser.



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• Cornelia Fullkrug-Weitzel (Germany), role playing as an elderly woman curious about developments within the ecumenical movement, led the panel presentation on **globalization and human rights**. The discussions focused on some of the initiatives undertaken in the area of human rights and in developing alternatives to the globalization process.

THE *KWAHERI*

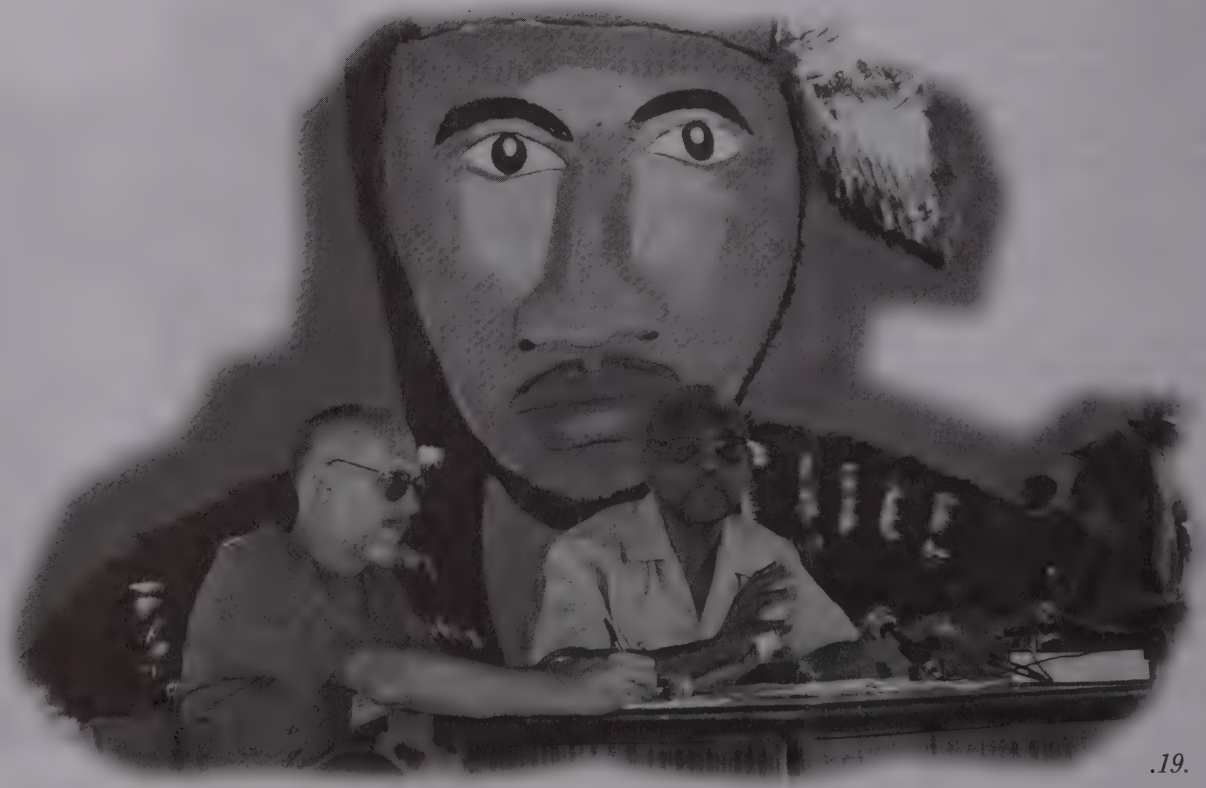
It took place on Friday night. ***Kwaheri*** is a Swahili word for "goodbye". Larry Rassmussen, Adebisi Sowunmi, Agnes Abuom and Sam Kobia gave recognition to those who have contributed to the success of the ***sokoni***, particularly the local hosts. Being the last Commission meeting, it was also the time to say ***kwaheri*** to members of the staff leaving this year.

EVALUATIONS

Three elements within the ***sokoni*** served as evaluation processes.

• The **Listeners' Group** initiated the sharing of reactions and reflections at the end of each day. Sitting around the bonfire, feet stretched out, wrapped in warm jackets and shawls, the participants shared in an atmosphere of warmth, comfort and openness. They shared the most meaningful moments, most powerful images, most touching experiences . . . Some made comments on things that should have been.

• On Thursday evening, Philip Potter, reflecting on the **History of Ecumenical Social Thought**, recalled, with some nostalgia, the days when he, along with other young people of his generation, had challenged the predominant currents of thought and structures toward a more inclusive ecumenical praxis. He told stories of courage and hope during the early days of the ecumenical movement, long before the formation of the WCC. His account



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provided a link to the other processes related to the Theology of Life programme. It also gave some space for a critical look at current trends in the ecumenical movement.

- On Friday, Konrad Raiser gave his own reflections on the ***sokoni*** and the **consequences for future programmatic work** on justice, peace and creation. He commended the concept of the ***sokoni*** as a possible methodology for future ecumenical meetings. He said that the learnings certainly would influence future directions of the work of the Council. Earlier, he expounded on the draft **Common Understanding and Vision** (CUV) document, which generated lengthy discussions, particularly on its structural and organizational implications.

Based on the reactions and reflections shared by participants, we consider the ***sokoni*** to have been a success. As a methodology, it had featured most of the elements emerging in educational praxis in many parts of the world, particularly after the disintegration of authoritarian regimes, e.g., growing emphasis on exploring human subjectivities; rootedness in communities; maximizing positive elements in various cultures and traditions; use of approaches that have emancipatory consequences for both women and men, youth and the older generation, and of the whole of creation

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

There are a number of elements that contributed to the success of ***sokoni***:

- The **gathering and the setting** itself. The ***sokoni*** had brought together a wide variety of people with a shared vision of justice, peace and integrity of all creation. The **diversity** of experiences and contexts of engagements provided a rich resource for learning and interaction.

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- The **shared commitment** to the vision of justice, peace and integrity of creation provided a sense of solidarity among participants which helped during tense situations. The commonality of perspectives was a factor for the commitment that participants, particularly the case study coordinators, gave to the process so that, in spite of initial apprehensions and uncertainties, they easily merged into the dynamics of the *sokoni*.
- The **content**. People who had gathered were aware of the commonality of the issues they confront, and that they were there to share how they live and struggle with these. There were broad themes within which varying issues fell into place. The positioning of the huts, in relation to each other, gave this added emphasis.
- The recognition of the value of oral tradition. Never before has there been a meeting of the World Council of Churches nor any of its units without mandatory documents. Considering that the reports on two years' work on 22 case studies all over the world were supposed to be given here, it was indeed significant that no such documents were distributed. Instead, there were the stories ... which proved very effective. Having heard each presentation, and made their own emotional reaction, the commissioners could then get the report. It was a reversal of the usual methodology.
- The involvement of local people. In the *sokoni*, local people were involved, not simply to assume technical responsibilities or extend the usual conventional greetings. They were part of the process. Their stories of pain and suffering, struggles and hopes were public testimonies of enduring faith. These stories, which had a power of their own, sank into the consciousness and memory of many participants.
- The cultural expressions. The singing and dancing in colorful traditional costumes, the powerful drama presentations, the reading of poetry reflecting contemporary struggles, the messages communicated by the drums, the intricate designs of baskets and crafts, and the humble representations of their way of life gave indelible impressions of the richness of African culture and heritage.

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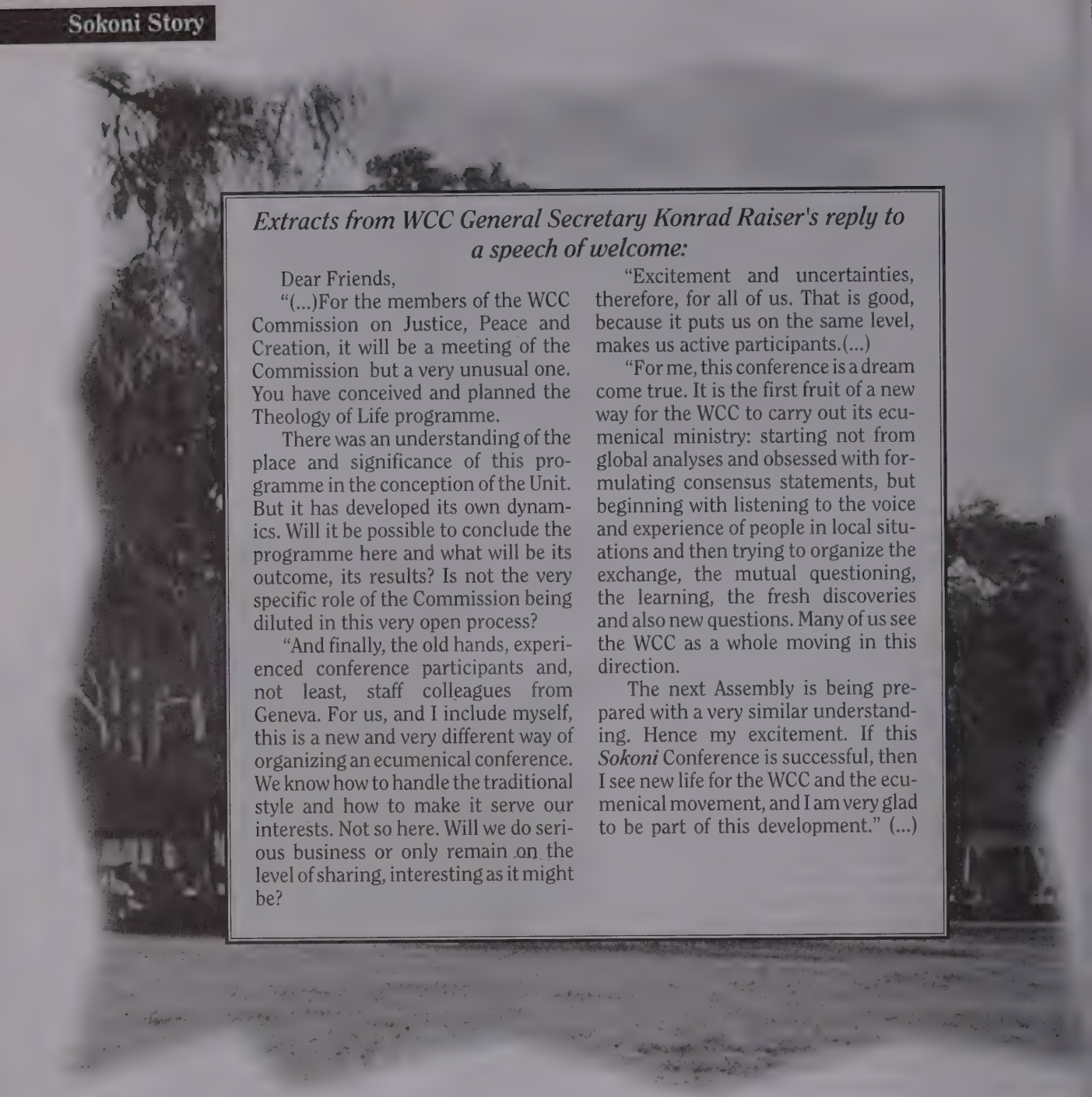
- The open space. The wide open space allowed a degree of freedom and creativity. This sense of space was most useful at times when the range of emotional experiences seemed too overwhelming. And yet, it was this same sense of space that allowed some people to grow towards each other and make lasting connections.
- The preparation. The holding of the *sokoni* was planned two years before it was implemented. This gave enough time to disseminate information, provide basic guidelines to case study coordinators, generate support from local partners, prepare logistics, organize teams, and plan the actual event.
- The support of local partners. The local partners had provided full support to the *sokoni* and had ensured that everything was in place accommodation, food, transport, technical facilities, medical clinic, the huts . . . The efforts given to invite a wide diversity of groups from all over Kenya cannot be underestimated. Apart from undertaking preparatory activities, the local partners were also actively involved in the whole proceedings.
- **The organization.** It was useful that several teams were organized to help facilitate the process: the listeners, the recorders, the animators, the technical staff, and the Commission members who had oversight of the whole event.
- **Living together.** Community is built when people experience living worshipping, working, eating, sleeping together in one place. The *sokoni* offered such a space.

More than anything, the *sokoni* was a cultural, perhaps spiritual, experience. Culture implies, more than arts and crafts, the whole complexity of people's lived experiences, their inherent strength, creativity, resourcefulness, subjective experiences, historical memories, political aspirations, how they relate with one another, and the varying expressions of their faith. From these emanates the people's distinct spirituality.



Extracts from WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser's reply to a speech of welcome:

Dear Friends,

"(...)For the members of the WCC Commission on Justice, Peace and Creation, it will be a meeting of the Commission but a very unusual one. You have conceived and planned the Theology of Life programme.

There was an understanding of the place and significance of this programme in the conception of the Unit. But it has developed its own dynamics. Will it be possible to conclude the programme here and what will be its outcome, its results? Is not the very specific role of the Commission being diluted in this very open process?

"And finally, the old hands, experienced conference participants and, not least, staff colleagues from Geneva. For us, and I include myself, this is a new and very different way of organizing an ecumenical conference. We know how to handle the traditional style and how to make it serve our interests. Not so here. Will we do serious business or only remain on the level of sharing, interesting as it might be?

"Excitement and uncertainties, therefore, for all of us. That is good, because it puts us on the same level, makes us active participants.(...)

"For me, this conference is a dream come true. It is the first fruit of a new way for the WCC to carry out its ecumenical ministry: starting not from global analyses and obsessed with formulating consensus statements, but beginning with listening to the voice and experience of people in local situations and then trying to organize the exchange, the mutual questioning, the learning, the fresh discoveries and also new questions. Many of us see the WCC as a whole moving in this direction.

The next Assembly is being prepared with a very similar understanding. Hence my excitement. If this *Sokoni* Conference is successful, then I see new life for the WCC and the ecumenical movement, and I am very glad to be part of this development." (...)

Photos:

.1. It was the "talking drums" which echoed throughout Sokoni.
.2. A general view of the Sokoni.
.3. A broad spectrum of people came to the Sokoni...
.4. A general view of the Sokoni.
.5. Ecumenical Church Loan Fund supported artisans had also joined the Sokoni.
.6. The former WCC General Secretary has his shoes cleaned by a Unit III commissioner.
.7. WCC indigenous consultant Eugenio Poma, lights the bonfire on the first night.
.8. Another group of "talking drums".
.9. The Mbere Dancers' Group from Embu.
.10. Street chidren dramatized their plight... bringing tears to many.
.11. A Maasai presbyterian choir makes its contribution.
.12. From left to right: Russel Botman, Agnes Abuom and Fulata Moyo role playing the dynamics of power and powerlessness in many countries in Africa.
.13. The honorable Achienj Oneko, a member of parliament who spent 10 years in jail with the first president of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, signs the "Martyr's Scroll".
.14. Synnove Brevik, Stan McKay, Alofa Nuusila, Rodney Peterson, Eugenio Poma, Tara Tautari and Te Rua Winiata, sharing their stories of creation as told by their ancestors and as lived in their own communities.
.15. Simeon Joseph leads the dramatic youth presentation.
.16. Dance performed by christian sudanese women living in Nairobi.
.17. WCC General Secretary, Konrad Raiser, receives the Decade Report.
.18. Agnes Abuom Unit III commissioner in Kenya.
.19. Philip Potter... telling the stories of our ecumenical history. (Unit III commission co-moderator, Larry Rasmussen, shares the stage with him).
.20. The observer from the Latin American Churches (Bernardo Campos Morante) welcomes Dr. Jack Anseilm Odhiambo, interpreter, to Sokoni.
.21. A choir of Kikuyu women
.22. Building the huts for Sokoni.
.23. A Turkana choir rehearses under the trees.

Me Katilili: A poem of Exile

by Atsango Chesoni, Kenya

In 1992 a horrific mass rape of schoolgirls took place in a residential college in Kenya. When questioned later, the headmistress (St Kizito) said: "We did not think it was anything, only the boys raping the girls."

NAT TARDREW

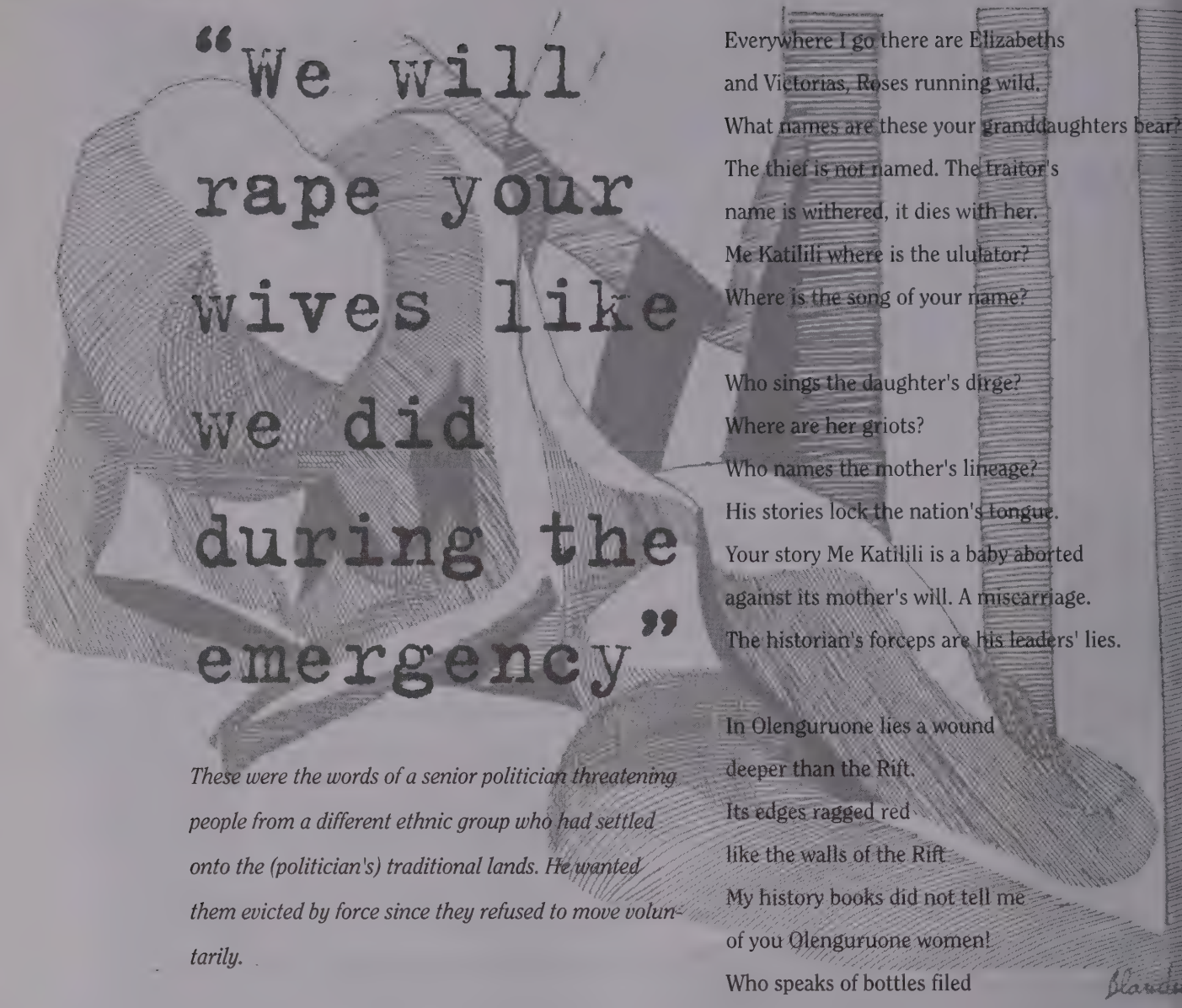
Yesterday Me Katilili, I saw the vultures
lighting on your grave. Hyenas cackling
on the horizon. Your grave-side fire gone
to embers. The watchers stolen away.

Me Katilili, stumps now mark the fields
you planted. Your seed scattered on sand.
Me Katilili, midwife at the nation's birth,
your great grandson dances in his sister's blood.

Me Katilili, you who walked the nation
from the great lake to the ocean
In Olenguruone your daughters plunged spears
into the hyenas' hearts. In Olenguruone
now vultures sit as elders, gardening
your daughters' remains.

Me Katilili, sons of the nation douse
your grave-side fire. Strewing the path
with their sisters' bones. Me Katilili,
scavengers sit at bay awaiting your decay.

The pot has been broken. The son
now stares at his mother's thighs.
He pries the place from which he came.
Razing his mothers' granary.



These were the words of a senior politician threatening people from a different ethnic group who had settled onto the (politician's) traditional lands. He wanted them evicted by force since they refused to move voluntarily.

Everywhere I go there are Elizabeths
and Victorias, Roses running wild.
What names are these your granddaughters bear?
The thief is not named. The traitor's
name is withered, it dies with her.
Me Katilili where is the ululator?
Where is the song of your name?

Who sings the daughter's dirge?
Where are her griots?
Who names the mother's lineage?
His stories lock the nation's tongue.
Your story Me Katilili is a baby aborted
against its mother's will. A miscarriage.
The historian's forceps are his leaders' lies.

In Olenguruone lies a wound
deeper than the Rift.
Its edges ragged red
like the walls of the Rift
My history books did not tell me
of you Olenguruone women!
Who speaks of bottles filed
with hot water pushed up
a woman to stop the nation's
birth?

We will incubate your memory, Me Katilili,
in the womb of our words. Memory's milk
is a child's name. Memory nurses on lullabies
whispered in a daughter's ears.
Your memory will grow into a question.
"Who was she? Menyazi wa Menza.
What is her story"?

by Atsango Chesoni, Kenya

THE SOKONI

A month afterwards

Rev. David Gichuru, Central Kenyan Mission:

"Greetings to you in the name of Our Lord and Saviour who gives hope and courage that makes life possible.

"I am writing to congratulate you on the Theology of Life *Sokoni* conference in January. Among the young people we speak the word faith as RISK and I really thank God for the faith you displayed when you (the whole of Unit III) took the decision to hold your Commission meeting in *Sokoni* style.

"The *Sokoni* conference did break a number of walls that divide people. In normal conferences we have highly academic presentations and that is a very strong, thick and impassable wall. *Sokoni* broke it because we couldn't tell who was, and who wasn't, an academic. All could celebrate life. Secondly conferences distinguish who is who in terms of status and unfortunately that wall still exists even among Christians.

"In *Sokoni* it only took a glance to see Rev. José Chipenda sitting on a mat and Roger Williamson shining shoes for a guard and Philip Potter queuing for food to know that the status wall had tumbled down . It was faith in action; a celebration of life. Whatever shortfalls were experienced as a result of it being *Sokoni,* it was unique.

"One lady who was selling Maasai stuff gave me this testimony: "Pastor", she said, "I can now be assured of my daughter's first term school fees after being at *Sokoni*". I thought that if we had not achieved anything else, a daughter of Africa will go to Form One on account of *Sokoni*. That was a score!

"May God's Peace and Strength be upon all of you in WCC. SHALOM!"

Margot Kässmann, Unit III Commissioner, Germany:

"What a wonderful experience! For me this meeting was a symbol of the ecclesiology we speak about in Unit III: the minister sitting next to the street child, the refugee woman from Africa next to the professor of theology from the USA. All sitting in an open circle, no hierarchy possible and anybody can join. The circle has no limits and no possibility of exclusion. If it becomes too crowded for you, you can go into one of the smaller round huts for personal exchange or for silent reflection.

"I had the privilege to bring my eldest daughter with me; it seems she has been converted to the ecumenical movement for a life-time in just one week. This exposure and encounter is something we need in order to create a new ecumenical youth movement. The experience was so deep because people did not present papers but talked about their lives; it was a living theology, theology of life. I remember vividly the Sudanese women crying, the presentation of the case studies on affirmation IV (That male and female are created in the image of God) while women were sowing and washing, the youth with their energy and power, the poems and the storytelling, the African spirit of life in the midst of injustice and despair.

"I believe that this was a breakthrough in methodology for the ecumenical movement. One question remains though: how do you transport it, how can others participate, learn from it, if they were not present?"

Lennart Renöfält, Unit III Commissioner, Sweden:

"*Sokoni* was to me, on many levels, a very strong experience. *Sokoni* talked to all my senses. Strongest was how songs, poems, storytelling, drama, reports and lectures together gave a holistic experience. The message was very much strengthened by the many different ways it was expressed.

"When I tell my friends that *Sokoni* was one of the best conferences I ever attended, they of course want to know what was so good about it. It isn't so easy to explain, or to put down on paper. You have to experience it. The challenge to all of us is to bring this experience in to other conferences and meetings.

"I wish that some of our future ecumenical conferences in Sweden could be a little like *Sokoni*. I wonder though if we have the courage to let go of traditions?"

Larry Rasmussen, Unit III Commissioner, USA:

"Competence, the competency of people. Agnes Abuom organizing and directing like the good

ringmaster of a non-stop circus; Philip Potter reaching into deep reservoirs of experience to illumine the past for the sake of the future; Konrad Raiser present to every nuance in crafting the way forward; case study coordinators and Decade spokeswomen finding ways to tell other people's stories as our stories as well; and Kenyan artists of all kinds, from Bantu to the street children to the musicians and professional actors, all putting art in the service of justice, peace and creation. *Sokoni* was grace in the form of people adequate to the responsibilities that have befallen them.

"Experimentation, ecumenical experimentation. *Sokoni* was and is one possible model for undertaking many critical WCC tasks: connecting local and global in ways that let the former live and thrive and speak in their own voice; learning via many media music, drama, dance, stories, analysis, discussion; participation and work together in ways appropriate to a diverse people of God; creation of an energizing space for exploring new methods of ecumenical collaboration."

Roger Williamson, Unit III Commissioner, UK:

"I spent much of the conference cleaning shoes (during the breaks but by popular demand the shoeshine sessions sometimes got extended). I was asked to be a "listener" (a what? A listener'). No one could tell me what a listener did, so I worked out for myself how to listen. There are three sorts of people who people tell things to. Taxi drivers, but I hadn't got a car and anyway it was a residential conference. Hair-dressers, but people want their hair to look nice afterwards too risky. And shoeshine boys, so I cleaned shoes and asked people what they thought about the conference. I listened to the speakers, the visitors, the drivers, one of the guys who built the huts and everyone seemed to like it.

"The ecumenical movement is a journey where we are always learning, encountering, listening, seeing, but unable to change very much. There is a danger that it is a journey from the unreality of a pretend *Sokoni* village to the unreality of the British church agendas, where the suffering of Southern Sudan, the plight of the Ogoni people in Nigeria and the other situations of which we heard in Nairobi impinge only very tangentially on the real business of church numbers and budgets and deployment of the clergy. Is our ecumenical commitment real?

"If I meet, somewhere in the world in ten years time, the young Rwandans who danced after our closing service at the cathedral, and one of them asks me: 'What difference did the World Council of Churches coming to Nairobi make to us?', what could I tell them?

"Does ecumenical travel broaden horizons or deepen commitment? Two proverbs perhaps sum it up. An African saying goes: Anyone who does not travel thinks their mother is the only cook'. And in England we say: The proof of the pudding is in the eating'.

Tomorrow is Good Friday. I will be praying that Africa's refugees get their daily bread and that the Easter message brings some glimmer of a better future for them."

Elias Crisostomo Abramides, Uni III Commissioner, Argentina:

"The *Sokoni* was a life experi ence. We were able to be with peo ple speaking, laughing, crying dancing, eating, telling us hov happy they were to be with us an we were able to answer in the sam way, looking in the eyes of women men, children, lay persons ordained persons.

"We had almost no reports an no papers but instead we saw th stories coming out from people mouths, eyes and hearts. The asked us questions. We asked them many questions.

"We were deeply moved, shar ing this wonderful and uniqu experience of life.

"The Kikuyu, the Luo, Th Maasai, the Kamba and th Samburu peoples coming fron Nairobi, Meru, Nyeri, Mombas and other distant regions, visite us at the *Sokoni*. We were also me by women from South Sudan an by Rwandese refugees. We visite Nairobi, the Kiberi district, th city of Embu and areas such a Kirinyaga and Limuru, which lef unforgettable impressions in ou hearts.

"Being a South American inevitably associated the *Sokon* with our *mercados* and with th *plaza del mercado* (market plac square). Going back to my Gree roots I also recalled the ancien *Agora* where everyday lif occurred in Greece.

"The Nairobi *Sokoni* was a lif experience which I will never for get and that has enriched my sou my eyes, my ears. If somethin had to be introduced as a practi cal example of the spirit of th *Theology of Life*, the *Sokoni* wa the best and most humane, sim ple and living experience."

Theology of life
Case studies based on the 10 affirmations

The affirmations

1. All exercise of power is accountable to God
2. God's option for the poor
3. The equal value of all races and peoples
4. That male and female are created in the image of God
5. That truth is at the foundation of a community of free people
6. We affirm the peace of Jesus Christ
7. The creation as beloved of God
8. That the earth is the Lord's
9. The dignity and commitment of the younger generation
10. That human rights are given by God

During Sokoni, reports were received from the case studies based on the ten affirmations from the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, held in Seoul in 1990.

"All exercise of power is accountable to God"

Russel Botman reported on the South Africa case study

"A love/hate relationship with the church. Loving the church for its spirituality and castigating it for its disconnectedness to ethics and the material suffering of the poor;

"People will continue to stay with the church, support its pastors and pay their dues even when they can't afford to. 'If you don't pay, you are a nothing in the church,' they say;

"People are positive about the changes in the country but have learned to expect less from institutions be they religious, political or otherwise;

"Hope is prevalent in every interview. However, the hope is generated by what they expect from their children and the next generation.

"African people basically believe that the spiritual world is present but as mediated presence. In that way God's power should be present as mediated by people: ancestors, diviners and children. Such mediation is presently the problem. Instead of power accountability, they identified obedience as a central dilemma."

"God's option for the poor"

Poverty in a rich country and what the churches do

Dr Heinz-Jürgen Joppien, Germany

"It is true that poverty in Germany cannot be compared with poverty in India, Brazil, Kenya on the same level. Poverty in Germany has a different face.

"But I am ashamed to report on poverty in Germany. Ashamed because a rich country like Germany has a significant number of poor people. About five million need gifts and social welfare to survive; about one million do not have adequate shelter (about 30 persons froze to death during the Christmas days in 1996).

"The economic definition of poverty in Germany and the European Union is: households which have less than 50% of the average income in society, are defined as poor.

"There is an everyday experience of poverty. We have a culture of domination and exclusion. The poor are separated and separate themselves from everyday life due to the lack of money.

"There was a cartoon in a well-known German newspaper. It depicted a champagne drinking party on the balcony of an apartment during New Year's eve of 1996. In the background is a chart of the constantly rising income figures. Below the balcony hide the poor, looking for shelter, for food, for jobs. This was a cartoon, but it represents todays reality quite well.

"The poor and the rich live side by side in Germany, but the poor don't articulate; they are ashamed that they cannot participate in the market as is expected of every German.

"Poverty in Germany is not a fate, or something which hits only lazy people: our case study shows it affects more and more middle-class people and families. The first step on to 'the poverty slide' is mostly the loss of a job. It is very hard to get a new job, because in the beginning of 1997 more than 4.7 million people were unemployed in Germany.

What do churches and Christians do to affirm life caring for the poor?

"'God's option for the poor' is a well-known affirmation in Germany. For many years it has meant that we should give surplus money for those in need in 'Third World countries'. Today we have to add the poor in our own country but at the same time not turn our backs on the 'Third World'.

"We believe that the middle-class church/congregations should no longer ignore the poor in our society; so far the poor are not visible in services, in prayers, intercessions.

"There are a lot of individual care/welfare schemes, 'diakonia'. There are church initiatives and solidarity groups which care for the poor in their neighborhood or community; also education, empowerment, advocacy programmes.

"The churches, as single institutions or as a network like EKD, are slowly becoming aware of the problem of poverty in our society: meetings, conferences are being held on the consequences of the social welfare policy of the government; official reports and statements are being written on the consequences of an unjust market economy.

"At the beginning of any reflection on their own status as rich churches in a rich society, the churches need to consider, for their own life as institutions:

- the consequences for advocacy for the poor,
- the consequences for sharing,
- the consequences for restructuring their own services because of a lack of money,
- the consequences for their own staff, employment.

"As a result of the case study we officially asked the churches in Germany to step in and to assist with a call for an official report on affluence in Germany; its dimensions and sources; to investigate ways of just taxation and distribution; and to conduct a study on the ethics or morality of the affluence."

The case study was done by members of the ecumenical initiative Plädoyer für eine ökumenische Zukunft (Plea for an ecumenical future) with the assistance of the academy of the Protestant Church in the Rhineland, Germany, and was presented in SOKONI by Dr Heinz-Jürgen Joppien.

"The equal value of all races and peoples"

Rev. B. Prince Devanandan, Sri Lanka

"Racism is not only in terms of the White people against the Black, or the nationals against the immigrants. It is also one ethnic group against another: e.g., the high caste against the Dalits in India; the Bosnian situation in former Yugoslavia; the Kurdish situation in Iraq; the Sinhalese against the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

"The racial oppression of the Sinhala dominant government against the Tamils has grown over nearly four decades and turned out to be a guerrilla war on the side of the Tamil people.

"This war started in 1983 and has escalated over the past 13 years. Except for a marginal percentage of the population, there is hardly a family in Sri Lanka that has not been touched by the conflict. Orphaned children, widows, murdered daughters and sons, raped sisters, offspring that have disappeared, parents despairing into lunacy, a permanent refugee population, a generation growing up brutalized. For the lucky there is separation within the family as one or more of its members are in exile abroad.

"Casualties on both Sinhalese and Tamils have exceeded 50,000 over the past 13 years.

"The generation between the ages of 12 to 25 years has diminished. Now the recruiting age for the guerilla movement is around 10. Both boys and girls are picked, trained and sent to fight the government forces in Sri Lanka.

"All this has brought about an army of widows (including the President of Sri Lanka), an army of orphans, an army of disabled and maimed, an army of permanent refugees, an army of brutalized men who are responsible for the growing crime rate in the country. These men are the army deserters who live in hiding.

"In the midst of all this, to affirm life is to bring about a negotiated settlement acceptable to all people and end the brutal and inhuman ethnic war."

"That male and female are created in the image of God"

Nonie Wales speaks from the experience of the Australian case study

"The challenge our case studies bring to the churches is how are we, as churches, accomplices with theological violence against women, and how are we challenging it? How are we creating alternative images of God, of justice, of peace and power, that include the reality of women's lives?

"Women in Brazil, in Australia, are seeking to reclaim themselves as equally, fully, made in the image of God.

"Our case studies shone a torch on the male-centered assumptions of many of the theological affirmations we have discussed in *Sokoni*.

"If we maintain a practice in our churches, a lived theology that implicitly situates women as made in the image of God, but men more so, then all our definitions of justice, peace, power, creation, will continue to treat women as somehow less than the full image of God.

"It is this affirmation and the interpretation and practice of this affirmation, for instance, that leads to the Dalit women being at the lowest place in society in India. It is the practice of this affirmation that means 85% of refugees are women and children.

"It is this practice and the interpretation of this affirmation that means men who are victims of racism and poverty can take their anger and shame out on women.

"This affirmation is not about women. It is about how we understand the whole of humanity. It is as much about how we, as Christians, understand men as it is about women.

"Despite the cultural, social and political differences between Brazil and Australia, the common experiences of women were amazing.

"The message of hope from our case studies is that women are claiming their full humanity, their womanhood as made in the image of God.

"The Theology of Life methodology was essential in that it recognized the centrality of women's conversations, women's songs, women's laments to the church's understanding of God and of what social justice means.

"Despite the huge history of theological interpretations that violate women in the very heart and mind, women transcend these inner voices; they reclaim their bodies as whole and worthy; they reclaim their place in the world as co-creators of life.

"In Australia, over and over, we heard women talk of their experience of the image of God as painful, battering, hurtful. Their experience of the affirmation 'that male and female are created in the image of God' was that of male and female created in the image of God but somehow men are more so.

"We say equally made 'in the image of God,' but all around us, as women, are male images of God, male-dominated church structures, male-centered cultures that deny women their full humanity.

"This is theological violence.

"It eats into the hearts and minds of women, so that we come to believe ourselves as less than equal.

"We turn in on ourselves and perpetrate violence against ourselves.

"When I look in the mirror and say to myself: 'you are ugly, fat and stupid,' that moment is an act of violence.

"I do not feel myself to be made in the image of God. I do not feel myself to be worthy of respect and affirmation.

"The society and the Church have taught me well that I am somehow less than men, as a person made in the image of God."

During the Brazilian case study, Davina Moscoso de Araujo asked a prostitute the same question, and she answered:

"Do I feel myself like God's image? Am I made in the image of God? Are you crazy? How can you ask me such a thing?

"How can a prostitute be like God? Do you mean by your question: am I like a portrait of God? As if God looking at me could see himself? No, you are crazy!

"Don't even think about it. It's a sin even to think about such a thing!

"I want God as something beautiful, clean, pure and very strong; to help and to help others. I don't want God to be like me. I don't want to be an image of God. Imagine. If that was so no-one would believe in God anymore. And the world would be crazy. The night would not follow the day and the stars would not lie together with the moon.

"Maybe, looking into my heart, people can find good things. It's the place where I keep pureness, beauty, dreams and, very deep in my heart, maybe I can find a little piece of God.

"But there is another thing I remember. God is powerful. Nobody gives orders to God. And I think that, in this case, I am a little like God; nobody gives me orders. That's a joke, so don't worry.

"When I got pregnant I did not know if I should have the baby. Everybody gave me advice; there were many opinions. But I had the baby. It was a boy. The birth of my son was such a marvellous sensation. And I asked myself: doesn't God make us too? Aren't we God's sons and daughters?

"I don't know if God loves us as much as I love my son.

"And I have also learned that God can forgive us everything. Everything can be forgiven. My son does not know I am a prostitute. I think he would not accept it. But a mother accepts everything from her son. Do you think God is like a mother? That God really does forgive everything the sons and daughters do wrong?

"I really believe in God. But I really don't know if God is in me, maybe a little bit.

"The Church says that everybody is God's sons and daughters. But why, when I go to church, am I ashamed? I look everywhere to see if someone can imagine I am a prostitute.

"Why do I go into church with my head down? If God knows me why am I ashamed when it's his house?

"But I talk to God. And I ask him to help me; to be happy. I just need a few things, a little house, a little garden and to love my son."

From the presentation on "Racism around the world"

Mukami McCrum, UK

"We have told you what racism is. I want to give you a few examples of the effects of racism on women.

"For the next few minutes my name is not Mukami.
I am every woman.
I am a Black woman living in the North
I am a migrant or immigrant woman in another country
I am an ethnic minority
I live in the country of my ancestors but I am the indigenous woman
I am a Dalit woman
I am a refugee, a foreigner, an alien
You will find me in every country of the world, living in poor housing, in the slums and in prisons.

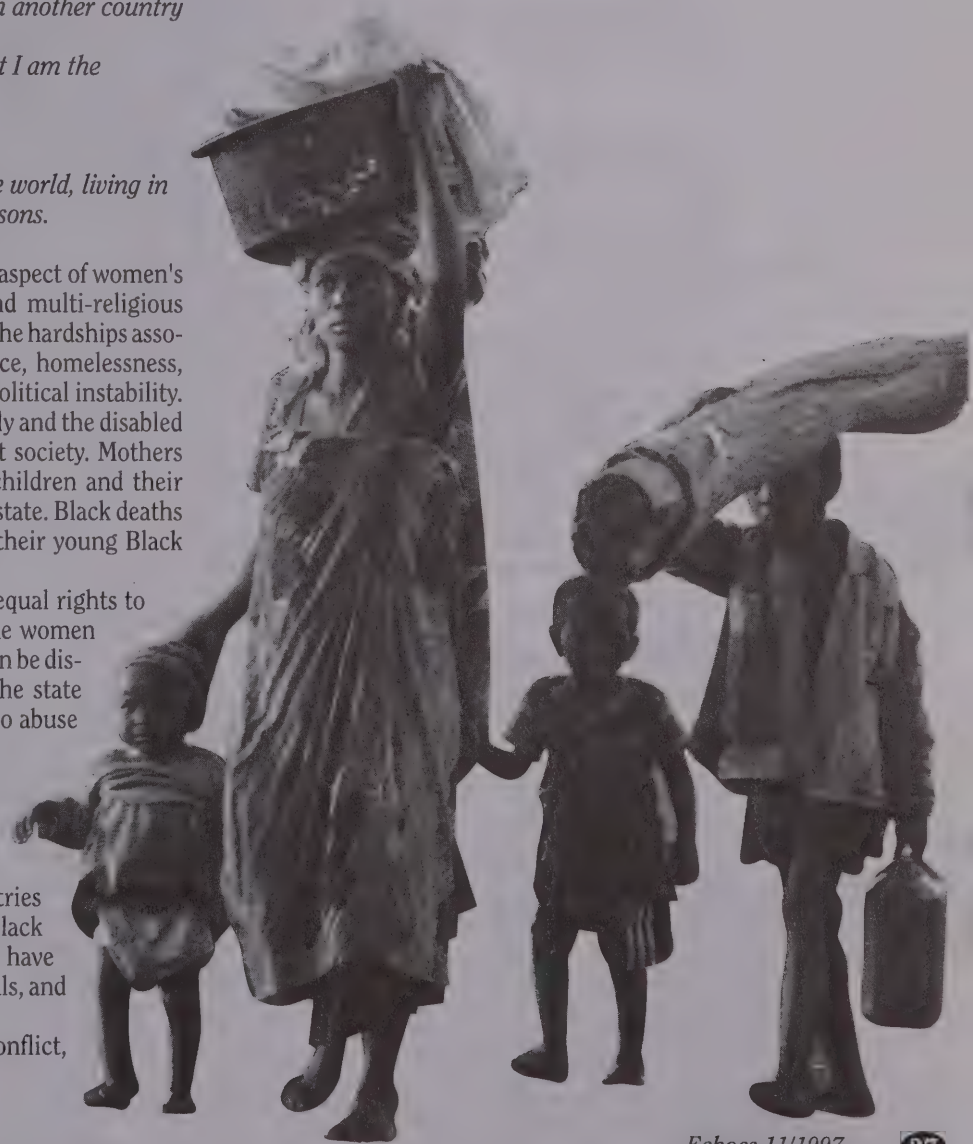
"Racism has a negative impact on every aspect of women's lives. In a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious world, racist and sexist attitudes compound the hardships associated with poverty, unemployment, violence, homelessness, health, war and armed conflict, power and political instability.

"Women are carers of children, the elderly and the disabled and they bear the brunt of living in a racist society. Mothers watch helplessly as their husbands, their children and their people are criminalised by racist laws of the state. Black deaths in custody, police brutality and murder of their young Black sons have become the lynchings of today.

"Racist immigration laws deny women equal rights to citizenship and residence status. They make women dependants, and, like excess baggage, they can be discarded, battered and abused. The laws of the state empower men, employers and institutions to abuse and discriminate against women.

"Assumptions, stereotypes and myths about cultures, religion and ethnic traditions exclude women from services which are designed according to the needs of the dominant or the host society. In many countries women are considered inferior to men and Black people inferior to White people. The women have low status and are accused of lacking in morals, and of bringing diseases and corruption to men.

"In the time of war or during armed conflict,



women are raped as punishment for their people's or their country's actions.

"Women are subjected to degrading gynecological and virginity tests at the whim and discretion of immigration officers. Forced abortions, sterilization and unsuitable contraceptives have been used to control women's fertility and sexuality.

"Racism makes women invisible, silences their voices and marginalises their contribution.

> *"Remember I am every woman. I am somebody's mother, daughter, sister, wife. You will find me at the picket lines in front of factories which exploit my people. You will find me in peaceful demonstrations against injustice. You will find me in books, in poems and in songs. You will find me standing in front of army tanks defying oppressive laws and risking my life.*

"We will not rest until the rape of a Black woman is considered as serious as that of a White woman. We will not rest until the murder of a Black mother's child raises as much indignation as that of a White mother's child.

"I ask you, the Church, I ask you my White sister, I ask you my White brother, I ask you all of you who have power and influence, to stand with me against the rising tide of racism. In the struggle against racism there are no innocent bystanders. You are either with me or against me.

"That is racism against women!"

Affirmations from the presentation made at the *Sokoni* by the youth participants

"We, the young people, affirm that abundant life is for all. We therefore challenge the World Council of Churches and its member churches to be an all inclusive environment providing full meaningful participation for young people in its structures, programmes, and processes, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender and confession. We also challenge the WCC and its member churches to use young people's creative energies and to listen to their stories.

"We affirm the power and commitment of young people to work for change and to challenge the WCC and its member churches to make the empowerment of youth a priority through more deliberate educational programmes, which include youth and peace building, gospel and cultures, and Biblical understanding and liturgical expression of JPIC issues.

"We affirm the unity that is in the diversity of all peoples. We therefore challenge all to bridge the gaps that exist between churches and young people, churches and ecumenical youth, church youth and Pentecostal church youth. The WCC and its member churches must strengthen their relationships with grassroots youth organizations and young persons of other faiths.

"We affirm the oneness and fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We therefore challenge all to present the Gospel in all its fulness: the Gospel of hope, peace, love and life for all cultures. This involves challenging our current global reality where a commercial culture lies to us and dictates the 'true' and only culture, where our wants become our needs, and where the individual is affirmed over the community.

"We affirm the WCC Programme to Overcome Violence and encourage all churches to join in programmes to overcome violence. Both in churches and in wider society, ministries must be created that address violence and structures that institute oppression. To that end, we also encourage continued work and focus on seeing and facilitating youth as agents of peace as we strive together to build a culture of peace.

"We, above all, affirm the life of youth and challenge the WCC to provide for their inclusion, empowerment, and fulfilment. Youth perspectives by way of meaningful participation are necessary for both the present and future of the World Council of Churches.

"These are our challenges to you."

When I grow up

by Bantu Mwaura, Kenya

When I grow up,
I don't want to be a doctor like that doctor because that doctor took my life
And he will have to answer to my creator

When my mum was big with me
And she was all alone-apart from me
And I started knocking for the door to be opened she felt the pinch and she had to respond

She crawled painfully to that doctor
For I was knocking really hard
And while knocking I knew not the time
For while Inside, You know not the time

I wish I knew, I'd have waited for day
But when she reached that doctor's gate
And she called to that doctor
That doctor wanted disturbance allowance, for it was midnight

But before my mum could even promise...
I was pushing to see the human world
I noticed it was not a human world
For that doctor insisted on pre-payment

And that human world that was not really human
Was a really cold world
The only thing I wanted, was to go back
And yes, I went back to the warmth of the nether world

So, when I grow up, I want to be a doctor
And teach that doctor how to be a doctor and how to make the human world really human
When I grow up

Letter to dad

Dad
Today I dare you
Be no devil ...
I dare no devils
Be a man
Brace for my daring tongue
My pregnant tongue
Labours to birth

When at birth
I rushed to release
Mother's labour pains
I delighted my way out
Only to come face to face
With your contorted grimace
Your disappointment
At seeing a baby girl
And that's why I cried

I was not alone
My brother was hot
At my heels
Mother's second contraction
Held your breath
His arrival
Made your life
Your face bloomed
Like glory in the morning
He cried
Tears of joy

Dad
Would you rather
Your mum was a man?

When my brother
Went to play with mud and soil
You ordered me to be home
To cook for him
And wash his dirty clothes
I should learn
To be a woman
You said

I cried
When you held
My brother's arm
And took him to school
'I also have a brain' I yelled
'You're only a woman' you said

Then my brother
Has finished school
Now a grown up
He chooses what to do
But me ...
Restricted within the kitchen
When my brother goes to school

Now he wants to marry
You let him make his choice
And me ...
You bring a man your age
To take my hand in marriage
I'm not a luggage
To be issued at will

Dad
Today I dare you
My obedience
You deserve no more

You have denied me
All my choices
I have laboured for you
Since birth
Now you want
To sell me
Like an old mule
That chance
You shall not have
From today:
Go your way
I go mine
I'm free again
As I was
In my mother's womb

Let's stop fighting

When they come and preach hatred to u
It's because they want to divide us

When they want us killing each other
It's because they want to remain in powe

When they instigate the burning of our hou
It's because they hate to see us live togeth

When we don't live in harmony
We only allow them to plunder our count

When they give us spears
To spear each other to death

It's because they want to cheat us
That we can't live in peace

So let's take those spears
And throw them back at them

And live in peace and harmony
Like brothers and sisters we've always be

To allow our country
To stride ahead

So please, let's stop fighting.

Arithmetics

My son you have gone to school
You boast solving Carey Francis problems
Come then and solve the arithmetics of coffee
Coffee and Carey are two and different mathematics

I want you to tell me in plain language
What teachers have taught you in school

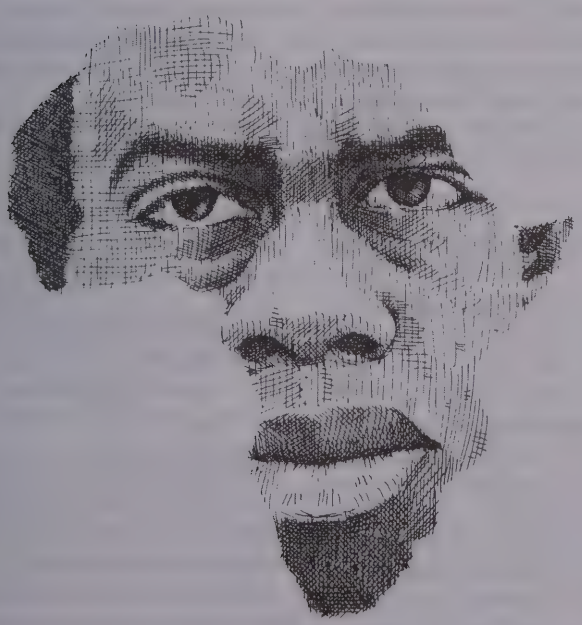
When I plant and tend and harvest my coffee berries
And sell them to the cooperative like a patriot
Coffee being a leading foreign exchange earner
I still wait for square years for my pay

Solve for me this arithmetics of coffee
Seeing as it is they're different mathematics

Then I enter a shop to buy some coffee beverage
What a shock to realize the tag of price on it
Like importing some iron ore from over the sea
Why then do I toil and break my back

And that's when I apply the arithmetic of coffee
I refuse to toil and break my back
In the pretext of being a patriotic farmer
While others enjoy the fruits of my broken back

Or then tell me my son in plain language
What the classroom mathematics have taught you to do.



JOTtINGS

Unit Staff experiences shared

A WCC petition campaign on climate change has shown "there is a widespread longing for a more responsible relationship with creation", said Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, WCC General Secretary, to the opening session of the latest UN conference on climate change, the Sixth Session of the Ad hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM VI) in Bonn, Germany.

The campaign called on governments:

- to fulfil their promises made at the Rio Earth Summit to stabilise CO2 emissions by the year 2000 at 1990 levels;
- to adopt policies and binding international agreement for greater reductions after 2000; and
- to promote more public debate on climate change issues and increase citizens' participation in finding solutions.

Dr Raiser gave the AGBM delegates a "message of encouragement". The recent WCC campaign, he said, has shown that "public opinion can be mobilised in support of measures leading to a more efficient use of energy and to more socially responsible lifestyles".

"Churches view climate change as an issue of global justice," Dr Raiser told the delegates. Because the consequences of climate change "will be suffered disproportionately by peoples of low-level island states and coastal regions" and "the poor will be most severely affected," the WCC considers its campaign an act of solidarity with countries of the South, he said.

"Unless governments act now to stem the detrimental effects of climate change," Dr Raiser warned the UN negotiators, "we will miss a vital opportunity to preserve and pass on to future generations a life-sustaining environment for all the world's inhabitants."

Unit III Executive Director Meets Representatives from Shell International on Ogoniland Report

Four officers of Shell International met with some WCC staff for discussions of

WCC report "Ogoni, The Struggle Continues."

It had been sent both to the Nigerian Government and Shell, inviting their comments, before the WCC Central Committee considers it at its September 1997 meeting. Shell responded, questioning some details of the report, and asking for a face-to-face discussion of "ways the WCC and Shell might cooperate" in addressing the concerns of the Ogoni people.

The conversations though cordial, revealed clear differences of perspectives on the situation both of Nigeria and of Ogoniland in particular. Shell spoke of recent improvements in its Statement of General Business Principles, and of a plan to provide human rights training to its personnel in both headquarters and field operations.

Several WCC-related church bodies and other international non-governmental organizations have also raised questions with Shell about its corporate responsibility in Nigeria, especially about human rights and environmental questions. The German church agency, Bread for the World, has recently published an extensive report on Nigeria which complements that of Unit III, and may be obtained from their offices in Stuttgart.

Déraciner la culture de l'impunité

Réunis au Centre d'Accueil et de Formation de Batié (Cameroun) du 6 au 14 avril 1997, une soixantaine de représentants d'Eglises et de mouvements Chrétiens provenant de 13 pays d'Afrique et d'Europe, ont pris part à un séminaire oecuménique organisé par le Cercle International pour la Promotion de la Création (CIPCRE), la Fondation Afrique-Avenir et le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises (COE) sur le thème "Eglises, Impunité et droits des victimes en Afrique centrale et occidentale: Vivre et annoncer l'évangile de la justice et de la réconciliation".

Les communications, les témoignages et les débats, sur la base des diverses expériences vécues des participants, ont fait ressortir:

- la gravité et l'actualité des problèmes liés à l'impunité dans cette région, des divisions ethniques aux génocides, des détournements des biens publics à la corruption généralisée, du gaspillage des ressources naturelles aux violations des droits politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels...
- la nécessité de répondre au droit des victimes (souvent impuissantes) à la vérité, à la justice et à la réparation;
- l'urgence de se mobiliser, à tous les niveaux, pour lutter contre les causes et les conséquences de cette impunité dans tous les secteurs.

On note d'ailleurs que cette préoccupation est partagée par les instances internationales, notamment par la Commission des Droits de l'Homme de l'Organisation des Nations Unies.

Pour les Chrétiens en particulier, cette prise de conscience implique un engagement immédiat et de tous les instants. Pour traduire cette détermination dans les faits, les participants ont décidé de constituer une **Chaîne de Solidarité Agissante** au niveau de la région concernée, en vue de renforcer l'efficacité des actions nationales par le partage des informations et des expériences, et par le soutien mutuel. Ils se sont également engagés à utiliser et à vulgariser les outils didactiques destinés aux communautés de base et conçus selon des approches théologiques et bibliques, psycho-sociologiques et pastorales, cit-oyennes et juridiques.

L'expérience pluridisciplinaire des participants (juristes, théologiens catholiques et protestants, sociologues, journalistes, éducateurs, psychologues, philosophes, etc.) a permis de cerner toute la complexité de la lutte contre le phénomène de l'impunité dans nos sociétés. Il apparaît donc que **déraciner la culture de l'impunité** est un combat long, difficile et risqué. Dans le cadre de ce combat, les Eglises et les mouvements chrétiens doivent jouer un rôle moteur dans le réveil des consciences, le démantèlement des mécanismes pernicieux qui favorisent la culture de l'impunité, et la manifestation de la solidarité active avec les victimes.

Evangelicals, politics and society

"Evangelicals want to get involved in politics and society..."

Beneditta is a Brazilian Pentecostal Black woman who got the second most votes as Senator in the last elections in Brazil. Míguez Bonino, a well known Argentinean Methodist theologian, was widely supported and won a seat in the *Constituyente* Assembly. An unknown evangelical political party got the third position in the last Nicaraguan elections. Evangelical churches in the mining region of Chile have been involved in social demands. Evangelicals in Peru and Ecuador came together at the border between both countries in order to pray for peace and reconciliation.

Evangelicals want to get involved in society and politics and they are moving fast in this direction. This is one of the outstanding ecclesiological features among the churches in Latin America.

In May 1996 a small group came together to share experiences. Three major concerns came out of the reflections:

1. The search for new ecclesial realities in Latin America.
2. Different understandings of the evangelicals participation in politics.
3. The increased importance of civil society in relation with moral values, spirituality and the need for social involvement in order to build sustainable societies.

The WCC was requested to initiate a study process on "Evangelicals and Power"; a research on "Ecclesial features in local congregations"; and the publication of a bulletin through Internet.

In February this year, another small consultation on "Evangelicals and power" took place in Geneva. Evangelical theologians and sociologists met with representatives of regional programmes. The Latin American Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches-USA also participated in this meeting.

This consultation:

- Identified the main thematic issues to develop a programme on study, training, analysis and actions.
- Addressed an Invitation letter to evangelical churches asking for sharing of experiences, involvement in processes of reflection, developing of actions and facilitation of training and formation.
- Agreed to facilitate national programmes in seven countries: Argentina, Peru, Chile, Nicaragua, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.
- Compiled a map of action and activities of evangelicals and churches in politics and society.
- Implemented research "Ecclesial features in local congregations" in three countries to discover common ecclesiological patterns in local parishes.
- Agreed to continue the publication of the bulletin "EPOS" and to strengthen the information through Internet.

Echoes From Elsewhere

An introduction to Echoes magazine in reactions, facts and issues from all over the world

We apologize

Many of you have sent in corrections for your addresses and you might be wondering why it took us so long to react. Our new mailing system also had a few hiccups, but these should not occur again. We sincerely apologize for any inconveniences that this may have caused. The necessity of staff cuts has meant that sometimes things take longer than we would hope. A cheery sorry!

Over the past several years the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society (EDCS) has gained increased recognition for its work, and share capital has grown beyond expectations. Preliminary figures show that 1996 was a record year: supporters invested over US$ 13 million in EDCS. These funds were generated mainly from support associations, but church bodies also increased their support.

Since 1995 additional sources of lendable funds have been brought on line through agreements with donor organizations. Known as "funds under management", they remain the property of the donor organization but are managed by EDCS using the same principles and criteria applicable to traditional share capital resources.

Ms Tara Tautari, speaking on behalf of the National Maori Congress of Aotearoa-New Zealand, at the 5th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD):

"Maori continue the struggle for recognition of Indigenous rights. At an international level we have participated in UN fora on Indigenous issues e.g. UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and the Open-Ended Intersessional Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as processes for the Convention on Biological Diversity and in particular issues of Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights.

An example of this, in 1993, in recognition of the United Nations' International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, the nine tribes of Mataatua in Aotearoa-New Zealand convened the world's First International Conference on the Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indi-genous Peoples. Participants came from all around the world to explore issues of commodification of Indi-genous cultural and intellectual property throughout the public and private sectors. An international declaration was subsequently developed and named the *Mataatua Declaration.*

The years subsequent to this have seen an increase in market mechanisms of commodifying biodiversity and the adverse impacts of the implementation of the Trade-Related Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Agreement. In a country such as Aotearoa-New Zealand, where ownership and management of our natural resources rests with two Treaty of Waitangi partners, it is morally unacceptable for the Crown Treaty partner to enter into an international agreement which could allow for our country's natural resources to be commercially exploited by outsiders without consultation with the Iwi (tribal) Treaty partners.

The struggle for Indigenous rights is often an expensive and time-consuming exercise that is not aided when governments, at the UN level, continue to restrict the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples within their decision-making processes. This would seem to point to a lack of transparency and accountability that surely is not in keeping with the "spirit of Rio" (the Rio Earth Summit).

Echoes
justice, peace and creation news

Echoes is an occasional publication of the World Council of Churches' Programme Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation.
It is intended to share information and insights on the concern of the Unit.
This journal replaces: "Women in a changing world", "Youth", "CCPD: for a change", "Link", "Church and Society Newsletter" and "Forum".

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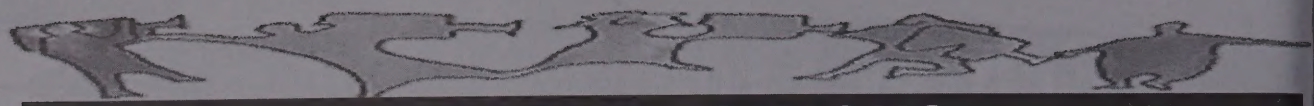

WCC PUBLICATIONS

"A MOMENT TO CHOOSE: RISKING TO BE WITH UPROOTED PEOPLE".

Nearly one in every 50 people in the world today is a refugee or internally displaced or a migrant.

This is the figure given in a new World Council of Churches' (WCC) resource book, "A Moment to Choose: Risking to be with Uprooted People".

At the same time, details of grants totalling 170,000 Swiss francs for church-related work with uprooted people have been announced.

The WCC has adopted the term uprooted people' to describe refugees, migrants and all other persons who have been forcibly displaced.

According to "A Moment to Choose", "Uprooted people have become manifestations of worldwide economic and social failures to meet basic human needs of people and protect human dignity".

The WCC and its member churches have been engaged in ministry with refugees and other displaced persons for the last 50 years. Latest church attempts to address the crisis of uprooted people have led the WCC to declare 1997 the Ecumenical Year for Churches in Solidarity with the Uprooted. WCC General Secretary, Rev Dr Konrad Raiser, focused on this theme in his last Christmas Message.

The purpose of the resource book on the topic is twofold. Firstly, it aims to help policy makers and academics as well as all who wish to understand the causes and consequences of the forced displacement of people. The book lays out the reasons which compel people to leave their communities and countries of origin. These range from immediate threats to life, safety and freedom due to war or persecution, to situations where economic conditions make the prospects for survival marginal or nonexistent.

Secondly, the book aims to challenge the churches to prophetic and practical responses that promote human dignity and sustainable communities. In doing this, it identifies a number of "Signs of Hope". Over 50 concrete examples are given of groups involved in various work with uprooted people. Details and contact addresses are given for readers who wonder,"What can I do next?"

The resource book can be used for bible studies, sermons, awareness building workshops, basic material for policy development and advocacy and by all those interested in knowing why so many millions of people are uprooted and who wish to do something to change the situation.

"A Moment to Choose" also details the consequences of forced migration. Examples are given of personal testimony. Two Burmese refugee parents are quoted, "Sometimes we wonder about our children. Will they ever get a proper education? Is there a future for them besides refugee camps?" An asylum seeker in Britain says, "I can't bear this life of hiding any more...they say I am not a refugee...but I know I will be imprisoned, tortured, killed if I return...they ask for proof?...I worry about my wife and children back home...is there anyone who cares?"

On many pages, biblical quotations appear alongside the personal testimonies, and there is a whole section devoted to a theological reflection on why the Christian Church should be particularly concerned with "the stranger".

A final chapter reproduces the "Call to Action" contained in the September 1995 WCC Central Committee statement on uprooted people. This statement emphasised the concern of the Council's member churches for uprooted people and encouraged active church responses to the many dilemmas facing uprooted people.

The WCC resource book will stimulate thinking and debate by those who use it. As the introduction acknowledges, "Xenophobic hostility...has increased. The will of governments to provide protection for uprooted people has declined sharply...Outsiders and newcomers have become scapegoats". Against this negative background the resource book asks, "Are we capable of naming and challenging the root causes' of forced migration which are bound up in the dominant global economic system? Are churches prepared to advocate and practice equitable sharing of the limited resources of the planet?" The conclusion is that churches "must see, hear and be present to the suffering and hopes of uprooted people, as well as accompany them in their suffering and the journey towards hope".

Review copies of the resource book (English now, French, German and Spanish later in the year) can be obtained from WCC, Unit IV, Sharing and Service, Refugee and Migration Service. Telephone (41.22) 791.6318 or 6320; Fax 788.0067; E-mail hm@wcc-coe.org or pt@wcc-coe.org Single copies will be provided without charge to church groups Copies are available to the public and other organisations for 15 Swiss francs each shipping included.

OGONI: THE STUGGLE CONTINUES

UNIT III PUBLICATIONS.

"The suffering of many Nigerians as a result of the gross violations of human rights, denial of their civic rights, and the mismanagement of the economy, has been widely covered by the media inside the country as well as internationally. But it is the plight of the Ogoni people that has been the sharp focus of the WCC's attention since 1994 and therefore, also the subject of this report.

In early 1996, the WCC sent a team to Nigeria as a mark of solidarity as well as to obtain the necessary information about the prevailing conditions there. Eyewitness testimony to the oil spills, dumping of oil into waterways and the concomitant environmental pollution; gas flares, over-ground oil pipes that crisscross Ogoniland; the heavy presence of military personnel; interviews with the people whose lives are affected by those phenomena, are hard evidence and not mere propaganda. The narrative style of this report makes it easy reading. By repeating the personal stories verbatim, the report allows the victims to speak directly to the reader, and even to touch his/her soul.

While the focus of this report is Ogoniland and the suffering of the Ogonis, our concern is, nevertheless, for all the people of Nigeria. The Ogoni case is chosen to highlight a socio-political malaise that is generally widespread in the whole of Nigeria. Ogoniland renders itself for such highlight because, having dared to stand up for their rights, even unto death, the Ogonis have borne the worst brunt of the military repression. The killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others in December 1995, awoke the world to that reality.

Many Nigerians, and especially the churches, are desirous that the truth about the situation in their country be made known to the outside world. It is our hope that their desire and prayers will be met by this report being circulated as widely as possible."

Copies available from Unit III, WCC.

WHERE THERE IS NO ARTIST,

Development drawings and how to use them

by Petra Rohr-Rouendaal.

A picture is worth a thousand words,' as the saying goes, and visual aids can provide information, provoke discussion and discovery, and make difficult ideas easy to understand. They can also improve the accessibility of a book or a poster simply by making it look more interesting.

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The book contains more than 500 drawings relating to a wide range of educational and health issues, along with advice on copying, enlarging and otherwise changing the illustrations without using special equipment to make them appropriate to a particular situation. There is also advice on pre-testing materials, to make sure their message will be understood by the intended audience.
This book is for field workers, teachers, and others who wish to produce appropriate illustrations in the community for educational purposes.
128pp. January 1997. Paperback. ISBN 1 85339 391 6. ú12.95. US$ 24.95
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TRÓCAIRE *DEVELOPMENT REVIEW* 1996

Trócaire, the Irish Catholic Agency for World Development, produces the *Development Review* as part of its programme of research and development education. This programme aims to raise awareness in Ireland and elsewhere of the scale, dimensions and causes of world poverty and to promote individual and official action to overcome it.
The 1996 issue offers, among others, the following articles:

- Neo-liberal Adjustment and Globalization: A Southern Perspective *by Marcos Arruda*
- The Drugs Trade as a Development Issue: Proposals for an EU Response *by Andy Atkins*
- Trade with Developing Countries: Does it increase Income Inequality in the North? *by Frank Barry*
- The Chilean Economic Miracle: A Model for Latin America? *by Peadar Kirby*
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- Irish Development NGOs and Government: An OECD Case Study *by Ian Smillie*

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Copies of ECHOES can be ordered from the Unit III publications office at the WCC. The average cost of producing and mailing ECHOES is of US$ 5 (equivalent to SFr 7.-) per copy. Readers who can afford it are strongly encouraged to contribute. However, **please note** that any contributions under SFr 20.- (US$ 15.00) actually costs us more to cash than it is worth.

Individuals willing to express their commitment to the Unit III for Justice, Peace and Creation may also contribute in the same way.

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